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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ISDA Awards Six Specialty Crop Block Grants

INDIANAPOLIS –The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) today awarded \$417,034 to six individual specialty crop projects. Funding for this grant program was made possible through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Special Crop Block Grant Program. The projects awarded include Growing Places Indy's Urban Four-Season Specialty Crop Project, Purdue University's Indiana Hops project, Nashville, IN and Brown County Convention and Visitors Bureau's National Maple Syrup Production project, South Central Community Action Program's Growing Opportunities project, Purdue University's Food Safety Education project, and Purdue University's initiative to help further the Farm to School Program.

"Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, culinary and medicinal herbs, horticultural, and nursery crops, including floriculture," said Ted McKinney, director of ISDA. "Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes and/or aesthetic gratification. A list of specialty crops is available, along with a companion list of ineligible commodities, on USDA's website. I am especially pleased with the diversity demonstrated through these six projects."

Growing Places Indy's Urban Four Season Specialty Crop project at the Chase Legacy Center received \$34,630. They will utilize this grant by expanding production of specialty crops grown using organically principled practices and engaging the public year-round in specialty crop educational opportunities.

Purdue University's Indiana Hops project has been awarded \$53,917 to help build the infrastructure needed to support a robust hops industry in Indiana. The project will develop enterprise budgets, conduct variety trials, scout commercial plantings, identify scale-appropriate equipment, publish information that will help growers understand and overcome production challenges, and facilitate communication among growers, brewers, and research and extension personnel.

Nashville, IN and Brown County Convention and Visitors Bureau's National Maple Syrup Production project received \$70,000. This project aims to unify the state's producers through the process of understanding their joint marketing and sales wants and needs, creating a statewide brand under which they can promote and sell their work jointly, and expanding the scope of the National Maple Syrup Festival to launch the brand and help the producers expand their businesses through increased sales.

South Central Community Action Program's Growing Opportunities project has been awarded \$67,456. They will use this grant to grow specialty crops including herbs and leafy greens and provide opportunities to low-income people with disabilities and other employment barriers to improve knowledge and skills of nutrition, cooking, and hydroponic gardening.

Purdue University's Food Safety project received \$121,171. This project will increase awareness and knowledge of current recommendations and regulations for good agricultural practices and good handling practices, enable growers to write and implement a food safety plan, and facilitate successful food safety audits on Indiana fresh fruit and vegetable farms.

Purdue University's initiative to help further the Farm to School Program received \$69,860. They will utilize this grant by providing professional development for food service directors and teachers, aiding in the development of specialty crop classroom lessons by the teachers, and evaluating the effectiveness of this classroom engagement.

ABOUT ISDA

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann, who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

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